

# Dating the Death of Herod and the Reigns of His Sons

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# When Did Herod's Son's Begin their Reigns?

- Consensus view: 4 BC, based on Josephus's wrong consular years for Herod
  - Claims Herod's investiture by Romans in 40 BC
  - Claims Herod captured Jerusalem in 37n BC
  - Uses inclusive reckoning for Herod's 37/34 year reign—Filmer showed, from reigns of high priests, that evidence is solidly against inclusive reckoning in Josephus for the Roman era
  - Archelaus began reign before Passover, 14 Nisan. Herod had to die after 1 Nisan if we follow consensus Nisan-reckoning (contra Josephus)



# When Did Herod's Son's Begin their Reigns?

- Numerous problems with consensus date
  - 1-14 Nisan not enough time for Herod's funeral as described by Josephus, even if Herod died on 1 Nisan (couldn't die earlier in consensus chronology)
  - Josephus indicates that his people followed Tishri-based calendar in matters of government (*διοίκησις*, *Ant.* 1.81)—but Nisan-based calendar is required by consensus view
  - Appian dates Herod's appointment by Roman Senate after treaty of Misenum, August 39 BC, not AD 40 (consensus date)



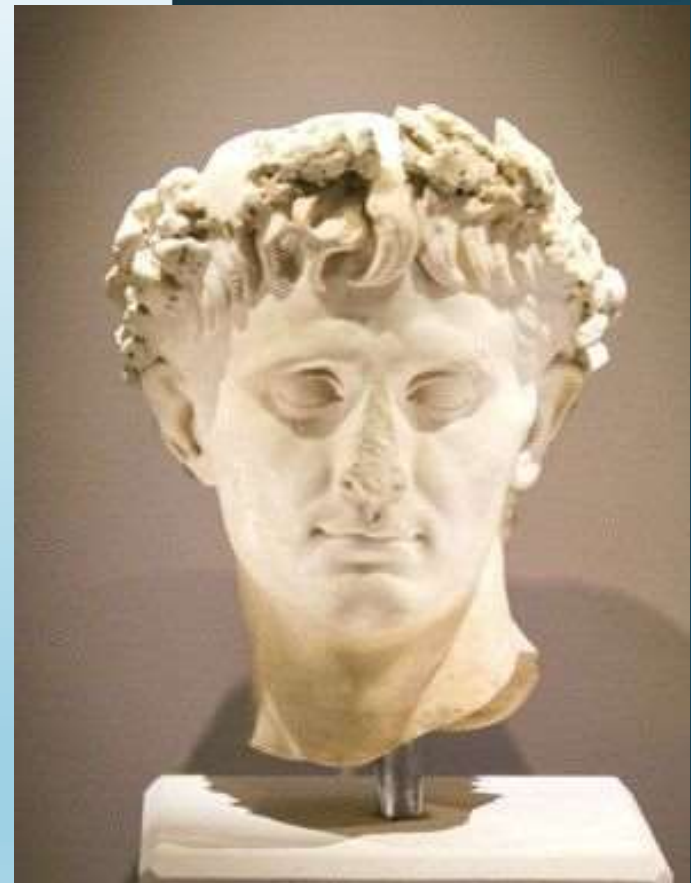
# When Did Herod's Son's Begin their Reigns?

Numerous problems with consensus date (cont.)

Appian, confirmed by Plutarch and Dio Cassius, says the Roman general Ventidius went to Syria to oppose Parthians after Misenum (August 39 BC). Herod went to Ventidius immediately after appointment by Romans, so appointment was in late 39 BC, not late 40 BC (consensus date).

Dio Cassius negates 37 BC for capture of Jerusalem, stating nothing worthy of note was accomplished in Syria/Palestine that year

Various elapsed times in Herod's reign as recorded in Josephus make the consensus view incoherent with the data



## Comments spoken to audience while previous slide was displayed

- After the assassination of Julius Caesar in 45 BC, power was shared by the Triumvirate. This consisted of Octavius, later to become the Emperor Augustus, Mark Antony, and the general Lepidus. There was rivalry and contention between Antony and Octavius. This was temporarily settled at the Peace of Brundisium, Sept. 40 BC. But there was still a threat from Pompeius Sextus, a pirate and son of Pompey the Great, who, operating from Sicily, cut off grain supplies going from Egypt to Rome.
- The Triumvirate could not take up war against the Parthians, who had recently taken over Judea, until the trouble from Pompeius Sextus was resolved. This was done at the Treaty of Misenum, which is firmly dated to August, 39 BC. After the Treaty of Misenum, Ventidius, the only Roman general who ever defeated the Parthians in war, was sent to Syria/Palestine to war against the Parthians, which he did successfully.
- Ventidius was in Syria/Palestine when Herod, after a hasty stay in Rome in which he was appointed king of Judea by the Romans, arrived there. Therefore Herod could not have been appointed king by the Roman Senate in 40 BC (consensus view); it had to be after the Treaty of Misenum (August 39 BC), i.e. in the fall of 39. This is fatal to the consensus dates for Herod's reign. True dates: appointed by Senate, fall 39; captured Jerusalem, fall 36 BC.

# Evidence that Herod's Sons Antedated Their Reigns

- Josephus
  - At Antipater's trial Herod stated that he had shared royal authority with Antipater (*War* 1.625)
  - Antipater stated the same in his defense (*War* 1.631-632)
  - Thus, there is evidence that Herod's sons had royal status *before* his death (*War* 1.461)—not after his death as in the consensus view



# Overview of Career of Herod

- Our view: Herod died in early 1 BC (i.e., during 2t BC) after a reign of 37/34 years
  - Investiture in late 39 BC (1<sup>st</sup> de jure full year = 38t BC)
  - Went immediately to Syria/Palestine. Ventidius was already there; Ventidius arrived autumn 39 BC, after Treaty of Misenum in August 39 BC.
  - Captured Jerusalem on 10 Tishri 36 BC (de facto accession year 36t BC; 1<sup>st</sup> full year 35t BC)
  - Josephus (*Ant.* 14.487) dates capture of Jerusalem 27 years “to the day” after capture by Pompey the Great in 63 BC, i.e. on 10 Tishri 36 BC instead of consensus 37 BC.



# Herod's "Year 3" Coins

- Only Dated Coins of Herod the Great
- Four denominations (8, 4, 2 protot, 1 prutah?)
- Inscription ΒΑΣΙΛΩΣ ΗΡΩΔΟΥ
- Year three as **ΛΓ**
- Also superimposed **ΤΡ** = *trito* (both 2 protot and 1 prutah exist without this mark, likely for re-issued coins in later years; therefore not a mint mark)





# Herod's "Year 3" Coins

- Issued to mark his reign in Jerusalem
- 3<sup>rd</sup> year would have begun shortly after capture of Jerusalem (10 Tishri 36 BC)
  - Counted in non-inclusive way from Herod's investiture in 39 BC
  - Used Tishri-based years
- Could not be as in consensus view which would have required "year 4"
  - Consensus view counts from 40 BC to 37 BC in Nisan-based years
  - Consensus view proposes inclusive reckoning (40n, 39n, 38n, 37n = year 4)



Following slides will show that these successors of Herod, after Herod's death in early 1 BC, back-dated their reigns to the Judean year beginning in Tishri of 6 BC

- Archelaus—Herod's appointed successor (Matt 2:22). Ethnarch of Samaria, Judea and Idumea. No dated coins but, from Roman authors and Josephus, his dates are firmly calculated as **6t BC** (antedated; 2t BC actual) to AD 5t.
- Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee and Perea (Matt 14:1; Mk 6:14, Luke 3:1, Acts 4:27, 13:1). Many dated coins; those of his 43<sup>rd</sup> and last year give his dates **from 6t BC** (antedated) to AD 38t.
- Philip, tetrarch of Iturea, Gaulanitis, Trachonitis, Paneas, Batanea, Trachonitis, Auranitis (Matt 14:3, Mark 6:17). His latest year coin shows he reckoned his dates **from 6t BC** (antedated) to AD 32t.



Coins of Archelaus (undated)



# Archelaus: 6t BC-AD 5t

- Archelaus—Ethnarch of Samaria, Judea and Idumea (Matt. 2:22)
  - Issued no dated coins
  - Last year was AD 6 according to Dio Cassius (55:27)
  - Reigned ten years (*Ant.* 17.342)
  - Narrative in *War* and *Ant.* suggests that Archelaus’s banishment to Gaul came before the fall of AD 6 (i.e., in AD 5t)
  - Non-inclusive reckoning makes his accession year AD 5t – 10 – 1 = 6t BC.
  - This is before death of Herod in either the consensus system (4 BC, wrong) or 1 BC (correct). Antedating is required.



Obverse: ΗΡΩΔΟΥ

Reverse: ΕΘΝΑΡΧΟΥ

“Herod [the] Ethnarch”

# Antipas: 6t BC-AD 38t. (Mt 14:1, Acts 4:27, 13:1)

- Antipas—Tetrarch of Galilee and Perea
- Banished in AD 39; before Gaius (Caligula) left for Gaul in the fall of the year
- Last coins (4 designs) dated to year 43 (ΕΤΟΥΣ ΜΓ)
- Other coins in years 4, 24, 33, 34, 37, 43
- Last year AD 38t
- Accession year AD 38t – 43 – 1 (no year zero) = **6t BC**



Obverse: ΗΡΩΔΗΣ ΤΕΤΡΑΡΧΗΣ, ΕΤΟΥΣ ΜΓ  
Herod [the] Tetrarch, [year] 43

Reverse: ΓΑΙΩ ΚΑΙΣΑΡΙ ΓΕΡΜΑΝΙΚΩ  
To Gaius Caesar Germanicus

# Antipas: 6t BC-AD 38t

- Antipas—Tetrarch of Galilee and Perea
- Latest coin is Year 43 (L ΛΓ)
- Banished by Caligula AD 39, before fall (Suetonius, 8.49), i.e. in AD 38t.
- Confirms Antipas's accession year as AD 38t – 43 – 1 (no year zero) = **6t BC**



Obverse: ΗΡΩΔΟΥ ΤΕΤΡΑΡΧΟΥ, L ΛΓ  
Herod [the] Tetrarch, year 24

Reverse: ΤΙΒΕΡΙΑC  
Tiberius

# Antipas: 6t BC-AD 38t

- Antipas—Tetrarch of Galilee and Perea
- Year 4 [Δ] coin
- In the style of his father's coins
- Year 4 = 2t BC (= fall 2-fall 1 BC)
- Why year 4 (2t BC)? Antipas had no authority to issue coins until after his father's death (early 1 BC)



Obverse: HPΩ[Δ]  
Hero[d]

Reverse: TETPAPXHC Δ  
Tetrarch [year] 4

# Philip: 6t BC-AD 32t. (Mt. 14:3, Mk 6:17)

- Philip, tetrarch of Iturea, Gaulanitis, Trachonitis, Paneas, Batanea, Trachonitis, Auranitis
- Josephus's manuscripts list his reign as 37 years with textual variants of 32 or 36 years
- Last coin is year 37 (LΛZ) coin, confirming that Philip reigned 37 years
- Also issued coins in years 5, 12, 16, 19, 30, 34



Obverse: ΦΙΛΙΠΠΟΥ

Reverse: LΛZ

Philip, year 37

# Philip: 6t BC-AD 32t

- Philip, tetrarch of Iturea, Gaulanitis, Trachonitis, Paneas, Batanea, Trachonitis, Auranitis
- Year 19 [LIΘ] coin
- Commemorates Tiberius's ascension to the imperial throne on 18 Sep AD 14
- Issued in AD 14t
- Philip's accession: AD 14t – 19 – 1 (no year zero) = **6t BC**



Obverse: ΤΙΒ ΚΑΙΣΑΡΙ ΣΕΒΑΣ  
To Tib[erius] Caesar August[us]

Reverse: ΦΙΛΙΠΠΟΥ ΤΕΤΡΑΡΧΟΥ Λ ΙΘ  
Of Philip [the] Tetrarch, year 19



# Philip: 6t BC-AD 32t

- Philip, tetrarch of Iturea, Gaulanitis, Trachonitis, Paneas, Batanea, Trachonitis, Auranitis
- Year 34 [LΛΔ] coin
- Commemorates Philip's refounding Bethsaida as Livias in honor of Livia Drusilla, mother of Tiberius
- Livia died 28 Sep AD 29
- Coin issued AD 29t
- Philip's accession year therefore was AD 29t – 34 – 1 (no year zero) = **6t BC**



Obverse: ΤΙΒΕΡΙΟΥ ΣΕΒΑΣΤΟΣ ΚΑΙΣΑΡ  
Of Tiberius Augustus Caesar

Reverse: ΕΠΙ ΦΙΛΙΠΠΟΥ ΤΕΤΡΑΡΧΟΥ ΚΤΙΣ[ΤΟΥ] Λ ΛΔ  
By Philip [the] Tetrarch, founder, year 34

# Philip 6t BC-AD 32t

- Philip, tetrarch of Iturea, Gaulanitis, Trachonitis, Paneas, Batanea, Trachonitis, Auranitis
- Year 5 [LE] coin
- Why year 5 (1t BC)? Antipas had no authority to issue coins until after his father's death (early 1 BC)
- It is significant that none of Herod's sons issued coins before their father's death in early 1 BC; they would not have had authority to do so while he was still alive.



Obverse: ΦΙΛΙΠΠΟΥ ΤΕΤΡΑΡΧΟΥ Λ Ε  
Of Tiberius Augustus Caesar

Reverse: ΣΕΒΑΣ ΚΑΙΣΑΡ  
Augustus Caesar

Why do thousands of dated coins for all three tetrarchs indicate 6t BC as the year to which they antedated their reigns?



## Comments spoken to audience while previous slide was displayed

- The consistency of these dated coins as giving 6t BC as the year which all three of Herod's sons antedated their reigns was somewhat of a surprise to us as we investigated this matter. This evidence is not based on speculation; the dating of 6t BC is based on contemporary physical objects—coins—of which there are tens of thousands in coin collections around the world bearing these dates. Of these tens of thousands of dated coins, none can be dated earlier than the death of Herod in early 1 BC. The explanation of why all three sons antedated their reigns to 6t BC is found in Josephus's account of Herod giving kingly authority to Antipater in *War* 1.625, 631-632, 641. They were following the precedent set by their father who antedated his reign three years before he took Jerusalem (i.e. the date when he was approved by the Romans to be King of the Jews).

# Conclusions

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- Herod died in early 1 BC
- Herod's sons all antedated their reigns as officially starting sometime in 6t BC (their accession year, the time Josephus indicates that Herod gave his sons royal honors), with their first full year of reign being 5t BC.
- Since neither Antipas nor Philip issued coins before 2t BC (fall 2 BC to fall 1 BC), the numismatic evidence suggests Herod died during that year (early 1 BC), and they assumed power later in 1 BC but before Tishri 1 BC
- The consensus view, which argues that Herod died in early Nisan 4 BC and his sons succeeded him that year, is disproved



# Papers on Herod the Great's Reign

Steinmann, Andrew E. and Rodger C. Young, "Dating the Death of Herod and the Reigns of His Sons," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 178 (2021): 436-54.

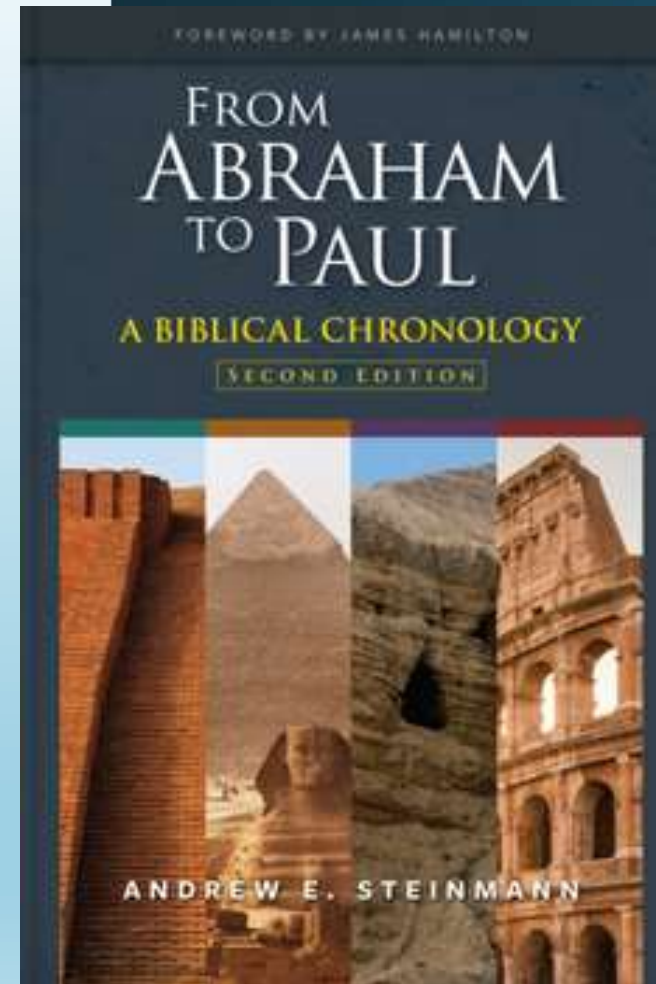
Steinmann, Andrew E. and Rodger C. Young, "Consular Years and Sabbatical Years in the Life of Herod the Great," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 177 (2020): 442-61.

Steinmann, Andrew E. and Rodger C. Young, "Elapsed Times for Herod the Great in Josephus," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 177 (2020): 308-28.

Young, Rodger C. and Andrew E. Steinmann, "Caligula's Statue for the Jerusalem Temple and Its Relation to the Chronology of Herod the Great," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 62 (2019): 759-74.

Steinmann, Andrew E. "When Did Herod the Great Reign?" *Novum Testamentum*, 51 (2009): 1-29.

Papers available at:  
<https://cuchicago.academia.edu/ASteinmann/Herod-the-Great-and-the-Birth-of-Jesus:-Papers>



## Herodians in the New Testament

